



Music of the Czech Lands

The Janáček Brno Festival

31 October–5 Nov. 2024 (MK 552)

6 days • £3,590

(with tickets to 5 performances)

Lecturer: Professor Jan Smaczny

Deep immersion in music of the Czech Lands, music which touches the head, heart and soul.

The opera *Excursions of Mr Brouček* and four other varied concerts, in historic venues.

Brno is one of the loveliest cities in Central Europe, a treasure-house of historic and modernist architecture, yet with few tourists.

Daily talks on the music by Professor Jan Smaczny and visits in Brno and the vicinity led by Martina Hinks-Edwards.

The second city of the Czech Republic and capital of Moravia, Brno is one of the loveliest and most interesting cities in the former Habsburg Empire. A showcase for historic buildings of many centuries and scene of a rich cultural life, it is nevertheless strangely neglected by tourists – which is part of its charm. This tour provides delicious immersion in the music of Bohemian and Moravian composers – Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák, Josef Suk, Bohuslav Martinů, Leos Janáček and others.

This is only the ninth edition of the biennial Janáček Brno Festival but it has already achieved international acclaim. Brno was home to Leos Janáček for much of his life. The theatre named after him was opened in 1965 and is a superb venue for a wide variety of opera. Here we see Janáček's *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, which follows the adventures of Brouček on his travels to the Moon and back in time to 15th-century Prague – epic, touching and often hilarious. Also in this theatre is an evening with the Bamberg Symphoniker and pianist Daniil Trifonov, conducted by Jakub Hrůša, music director designate of London's Royal Opera.

The other venues are the splendid Mahen Theatre, which opened in 1882, and the Reduta (next door to our hotel) whose history reaches back to the Renaissance (Mozart performed here). The artists in other concerts are the Martinů Voices, Josef Špaček (violin) and Miroslav Sekera (piano), and the Navarra String Quartet from Britain. The performances are interspersed with visits and walks in Brno and excursions to a country house with a Baroque theatre and to a magnificent monastery. There



Brno, 1930s coloured etching.

remains some free time for rest or independent exploration.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly mid-morning from Heathrow to Prague and drive to Brno, arriving in time to settle into the hotel before dinner.

Day 2. Visit the Janáček Museum, which preserves the composer's study and piano, and the monastery where the pioneering geneticist Gregor Mendel was abbot. Evening opera at the

Janáček Theatre: *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* (Janáček) directed by Robert Carsen and with Nicky Spence in the title role.

Day 3. Designed by Mies van der Rohe, Villa Tugendhat is one of the most important Modernist family homes in Europe. Visit subject to final confirmation. Afternoon concert at the Reduta Theatre (Mozart Hall): *Martinů Voices and Lukáš Vasilek (conductor): songs and choral music by Fišer, Novák, Dvořák, Janáček, Martinů*. An early dinner is followed by an evening concert at the Mahen Theatre: *Josef*

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continued

Špaček (violin) and Miroslav Sekera (piano),
Voříšek, Rondo for violin and piano Op.8;
Dvořák, Romantic pieces for violin and piano
Op.75; Fišer, 'The Hands'; Smetana, From the
Homeland; Martinů, Sonata No.3.

Day 4. Drive south through lovely countryside to Valtice, a Baroque mansion which lies at the centre of estates straddling the Austrian border once owned by the Liechtensteins, the richest magnates in the Habsburg Empire. State apartments, Baroque theatre, chapel, stables. Evening concert at the Reduta Theatre (Mozart Hall): Navarra String Quartet, Suk, Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale 'Saint Wenceslas' Op.35a; Janáček, Quartet No.1 ('Kreutzer Sonata'); Dvořák, Quartet No.13 in G Op.106.

Day 5. Excursion to the monastery at Rajhrad, a vast complex with a magnificent church designed by Jan Santini-Aichel, most inventive of Czech Baroque architects. Some free time before an evening concert at the Janáček Theatre: Bamberg Symphoniker, Jakub Hruša (conductor), Daniil Trifonov (piano), Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno, Petr Fiala (choirmaster): Suk, Ripening Op.34; Dvořák, Piano Concerto Op.33; Janáček, Taras Bulba.

Day 6: Drive to Prague Airport and arrive at Heathrow mid-afternoon.

Lecturer

Professor Jan Smaczny. Sir Hamilton Harty Professor Emeritus, Queen's University, Belfast, and an authority on Czech music. An author, broadcaster and journalist, he has published books on the Prague Provisional Theatre, Dvořák's Cello Concerto, Music in 19th-century Ireland and Bach's B-minor Mass. He is a graduate of the University of Oxford, has studied at the Charles University in Prague and worked extensively in university education.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,590 or £3,320 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,890 or £3,620 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus A320); private coach for airport transfers and excursions; hotel accommodation as described below; 3 dinners and 2 lunches with wine or beer, interval canapés at one performance; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and Czech guide.

Music: top category tickets to one opera and four concerts are included.

Accommodation. Grandezza Hotel, Brno (grandezzahotel.cz): a characterful 5-star hotel located in the heart of Brno's historic centre. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? On the sightseeing tours and excursions there is quite a lot of walking, much of it on roughly paved streets, some on inclines. Walks to and from the theatres are between one and 15/20 minutes. The tour would therefore not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking and stair-climbing.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Modern Art on the Côte d'Azur*, 22–28 October 2024; *Venetian Palaces*, 5–9 November 2024.